

WASHINGTON, D.C. --- Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) testified before the House Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations late last week to request a funding increase of \$6.9 million for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPO) program in the National Park Service's portion of the fiscal year 2003 budget for the Department of the Interior.

"I am proud to request funding from the Committee along with the Co-chairs of the Native American Caucus, Congressmen Kildee and Hayworth," said Congressman Blumenauer. "These THPO programs incorporate unique cultural values into contemporary preservation efforts. Authorizing this increase is a small yet important action that we in Congress can take to underline our trust obligation towards Indian tribes. We must work together to strengthen tribal historic preservation programs for the betterment of all tribes in preserving their culture."

The Tribal program is important to many tribal communities across the Nation. This increase would provide \$275,000 to each of the 31 tribal governments that currently administer THPO programs. Originally funded in 1996, the THPO program started with 12 tribal governments each receiving an average award of \$79,875 to operate their programs. In the current fiscal year, 31 tribal governments participate in the program. Despite the increase in tribal participation, the funding allocation for the THPO program has dropped to \$72,581 per tribe, which reflects a decrease of \$7,000 below the FY '96 level. The President's budget proposal for FY 2003 (\$3.0 million) reflects a drastic decrease of an average of \$10,000 per tribe.

Many tribes and tribal organizations support this funding request. These organizations include: the National Association of THPOs, United South and Eastern Tribes, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and the Navajo Nation.

\*\*Congressman Earl Blumenauer is a Democrat from Portland, Oregon. He is the congressional leader and spokesman for the Livable Communities movement, which helps ensure that communities are safe, healthy and economically secure through policies that encourage smart growth, environmental responsibility, economic vitality, and more diverse transportation and housing choices. He serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House International Relations Committee and is active on trade, technology, defense and environmental issues.